PIT SCHWEFFELBRENNER AND THE STATE FAIR

Pit Schweffelbrenner (E. H. Rauch, 1820-1902) was the earliest of our dialect columnists. His style of humor, which few subsequent columnists, from "Bohnastiel" to "Kasper Hufnagel" have been able to escape, is well illustrated in the following letter which we found in the Reading Sunday News for Sept. 26, 1875, and which is apropos at this time of autumn fairs. The letter is entertaining enough for the general reader, but it is also useful to the student of our dialect. It calls to our attention the dialect terms for many nearly forgotten objects. On the other hand to those who think our dialect is dying out it must be evident even from this letter that modern columnists like our own Pumpernickle Bill and the late Lloyd Moll show greater range of vocabulary and ease and facility of expression than did Pit Schweffelbrenner nearly three-quarters of a century ago. The letter has been abbreviated somewhat for our purposes, but otherwise it appears here as we found it.—ED.

Schliffeltown, Sept. der 24, 1875.

Mister Drucker:

Ich un de Beevy sin bissy alleweil om ready maucha for de Shtate Fair tenda de neagsht woch in Lenkeshter. According tzu de adferdisements gebts an orrig grossy tzeit in seller alt shtadt wo's so feel eashteckiche heiser hut.

Se hen yusht about an gooty un interesting premium li.ht un doh sin a dale fun de items. (Here the editor of the ECK has omitted a list enumerated under Miscellaneous and continues as follows:)

De fine art department is especially in miner line un doh sin aw a pawr items derfu:

For's besht shtick rinds-ledder; der greasht un besht assortment fun carpet lumpa; de besht specimen fun shtrimpshtuppa; der scientiffickscht job fun hussa flicka uf 'm hinnera sitz; der besht scented shtink-kase un der besht shu-wish g'maucht fun welshkorn basht, an holwer dawler's shtick.

Minerals, scientific un mechanic Arts departments: For der eltscht copy fum hunnert yearich Kallender; de besht collection fun Pennsylvania Deitsche shticker poetry; for de besht peffer box; for der greasht shuckle shtool; for de lengsht g'shmoked brodwarsht, for's besht g'finished hoof-eisa un for's greasht un besht shpinrawd, ea dawler's shtick.

Ornamental Department: For der besht si-troke; for's besht butter-fass; de besht holb dutzend flaesh hoka; de besht bushel parshing hutzella; der shensht dote Insh for's duwack sign; de besht lot karbsa un wassermellona un's greasht bushel ebble shnitz, dri dawler for de lot.

Family Domestic Luxuries—tzwea dawler for yeader item:

De besht buttle alt monnygahela whiskey; de greasht pint J. B. whiskey; der shtorricksht jigger whiskey plain; de greasht lot lager beer; de wulfalesht hunnert cigars; der besht dimmijohn ful brandy; de besht dutzend oyer; der greasht fuftzea punt g'shmokeder shunka un de besht quart Holland gin g'manufactured in Reamstown.

Glass un Queensware—ea dawler 's shtick:

De besht krupp-hock; der shensht koch-uffa; de besht brod-pon ona handle; de besht job printing press; de besht patent coffee-con; de shensht lot bocka-shtae; de besht latest style wehs-machine; de besht lot shmeersafe un de greasht assortment fun eight by ten fenshter shiva.

Produce fun der Bauerei—for en yeader item ea dawler un a bronze medal g'maucht fum feinshta Monroe County sole-leder: For de besht holb dutzend ess-leffle; sex parlor shteal os mer aw usa con in der kich; de besht bushel keshta; de shensht lot messra un gawwella; de besht shmut machine; der greasht wesh-tzuvver de shensht fancy baby carriage; der shensht American flag mit pole attached; de besht bushel shtae-coala un de besht invention for windla un onnery bobbelly klader drickla hinner 'm koch-uffa in der kich.

Grains, seed, flour, meal, un so weiter—ea dawler 's shtick:

For de besht bushel krumbeera; de besht lot bona; de shensht lot shmoke-house epple; de besht lot photograph picters; der greasht dribushel sock ful bosh-k'nawda; der besht plan for saur kraut ei maucha un de letsht un besht contrivance for de bet-wansa fertriva. (Here in similar vein follow sections on fruits and vegetables, domestic cookery, fancy needle work, etc. after which the following:)

Wass mich awer particularly aw gate is de premiums for allelee essays, reports un onner sorta literary productions for shriva. For sell is exactly in meiner line. For der besht report fun der fair gevva se $20, un dar very report wo ich alleweil uf forna nous shreib, grickt aw der premium—now mind eb er net dut. For de besht essay uf der subject fun potato bugs gevva se'n premium fun $25. Un sell is aw gor kea difficulty. De potato bugs sin new comers—narsht for a pawr yohr uf de Welt kumma, un era hawpt characteristics is fruitfulness un multiplication. Fun era pedigree is gor kea mention un de bucher fun Shakespeare un onnery ancient historians. Se sin, according tzu meiner opinion, an cross breed tzwisha de muskitters un selly shwartzy keffer wo als so klany dreck balla in der shtrose rumm rulla for tzeit fertreib. Se travella for common tzu foos, un shneeka rum in de krumbeera shticker un fressa sich full.

calls for honey, which would indicate that it is an old recipe, for honey was already in ancient times used in the making of fermented drinks. The recipe runs as follows:

8 quarts of water
4 pounds of A sugar
1 cup of honey
4 tablespoons of cream of tartar
1 tablespoon of cinnamon
1 pint of home-made yeast
1 pint of hops

Take 2 of the 8 quarts of water, bring to a boil and pour over the hops to scald them; let stand until cool, then drain the water off and pour into the crock with the other ingredients. Let stand 24 hours, then strain and bottle.—

Concerning the culture and use of asparagus among the Pennsylvania Germans a letter from Mrs. Stanley Arthur, East Mauch Chunk, contains the following interesting information: "You ask whether asparagus was grown in gardens 50 years ago.—Yes indeed it was, in the garden of the Best farm, South Walnutport, where Jacob Best, my grandfather, reared his famoly, it was plentiful every spring. It grew in a corner all its own and picked before the sun could shine on it. Grandmother said it did not taste good after the sun shone on the sprouts. This is how they raised it. What was left over in spring was grown to full height and used for **Mickegraas.** The asparagus shoots were cooked with meat. Plenty of the asparagus was put in the pot and served as a vegetable. Grandmother also made a milk soup of it, but never ate it in any other way.—We used **Mickegraas,** two or three branches, to make a fly chaser, for such flies as gather around drying apples or pears, or drying vegetables. In those days they were dried in the sun.—In winter cut fire wood was piled over the asparagus bed in the garden corner, in such a way that air could pass through it, with little open places all through the pile. The pieces of fire wood were piled up that way to about the height of two feet. In early spring, up through the holes of the wood came the creamy white sprouts. As the sprouts peeped up w would reach in and break them off. This was done every day; then the sprouts were wrapped up in a wet cloth and put into the dark cellar until ready to use. I do not know where they got the plants, nor how long they raised it before my day. I enjoy the ECK and often send it to my cousins in Indiana and Salt Lake City, Utah."

Returning once more to the use of saffron (**Saffrich**) in Pennsylvania German cookery we share with our readers the following very interesting information from J. Y. Schultz, Trexlertown: "While reading in your German ECK I saw the name of a plant (saffron) which reminded me of my boyhood 75 to 80 years ago. We had a plot of it in our garden and when Easter came around I often found my colored eggs hid in the saffrons. When mother had chicken and potatoes she always put in some saffron. Also to color the butter and some other things. The plant starts from a little white bulb and gets to be a bushy plant with flowers somewhat like a tulip. When I was clerking in a store we bought it from people that raised it. We had a little balance scale for weighing it and when we sold it a silver dime was put in a little cup and the saffron in the other end. It sold for 10 cents. We bought some wholesale from drug stores at 90 cents a pound."—

In the same letter Mr. Schultz refers to a drink of earlier days: "My mother made what she called "Wein Schling," a little water, sugar and grated nutmeg added to the wine, then put into spring house to cool. It tasted good in haying and harvest time."—

In the same letter also: "We had some wild asparagus, but we never knew that you could eat it. A few branches were cut for chasing flies, while we were eating."—

Today we come to our readers with requests for information about the following:

You have noticed that the use of yeast was common to all the above recipes for mead. Who will send us a good recipe for the making of potato yeast?—Are hops necessary in the making of yeast? If so, why?—Can any of our readers make yeast without a "starter"?—Kindly supply us with any recipes that require the use of yeast besides those for bread and doughnuts.

How many different kinds of cheeses were made among our Pennsylvania German people in former days? Can you supply us with recipes for the making of **Schtink Kaes, Haffe Kaes and Balle Kaes?**—We should also be grateful for recipes of dishes in which cheese was used in baking or cooking.

Please send your replies to The Editor of the ECK, The Morning Call, Allentown, Pa.

According tzo der notion fum President fun der Society, wella se de krumbeera keffer dote maucha, awer se wissa net exactly we sell tzu du is. An first rater plan is wannn mer rechty grossy shtiffle aw dut un dopt yusht uf se un dut se fermasha.

For der besht plan for de liquid fum misht howfa tzu safa wella se $50 premium gevva, un selly fuftsich dawler sin aw easy ferdeent. Der liquid is in Deitsh de misht-bree, un se behawpta os se useful is for's lond. A dale bawra era misht bree laft all nous ous 'm misht-hofe in de shtrose. Now, my plan is for'n longer hulsicher troke yusht auswendich on der fence, so os de bree fun sich selwer ni lawft, un wann's ols full waerd dipt mers evva yusht rous mit 'm wasser-kivvel un trawgt's nous ins feld un lared's ous so os 's lond uns welsh korn der benefit derfu grickt.

E. H. Rauch first gained renown through his "Pit Schweffelbrenner" letters, which appeared in his Republican campaign paper "Father Abraham," which as he said was "de eantsich Tseitung in der United States wu olly woch rous kummt mit breefa un onnery shticker in real genuine Pennsylvania Deitsch." In 1873 Rauch began to publish "The Pennsylvania Dutchman" a monthly magazine which did not survive the first three issues. In 1879 he published A PENNSYLANIA DUTCH HAND-BOOK, containing his famous Shapespeare translations into the dialect. This little book is now a rare item. "Pit Schweffelbrenner" appears as a character in Elsie Singmaster's fine narrative I SPEAK FOR THADDEUS STEVENS.—ED.